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RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECIN](#) [ELAB](#)  
SUBJECT: AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS STRIKE MAKES GUYANA'S  
SKIES NOT SO FRIENDLY

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (U) An air traffic controllers strike has caused cancellations of at least two daily Caribbean Airlines flights and closed Guyana's international airport during night hours. Daytime arrivals and departures, which include a four-time weekly Delta flight, are so far unaffected. Senior staff members currently man the tower during the day, but do not have enough staff to operate it 24 hours. The strike, begun January 30, comes as delegations arrive for the official launch of the Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS), which promotes the development of civil aviation in the Caribbean Community and formalizes arrangements for the sharing of technical expertise and other resources in the aviation sector.

¶2. (U) The air traffic controllers demand wage increases and better benefits, including duty free concessions for some staff. Press reports that the strike comes on the heels of the Minister of Works and Transport stopping a payment that the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) planned to give its employees.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The international airport suffers from the same poor management and lack of resources that affect most entities in Guyana. The current strike follows a string of troubles at the airport in recent months, including the cancellation of night flights in September 2008 due to runway light failure. President Jagdeo, who himself is out of the country, has yet to comment publicly on the labor dispute, though he is not expected to take a hard line against the strikers. End comment.  
Jones